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ABSTRACT

The child-centered Contemporary Australian Preschool Program (CAPP), one of five programs for disadvantaged children in the Mt. Druitt Early Childhood Project, is described and evaluated in this report. Within the CAPP, the child's role was that of initiator and the teacher's role was that of facilitator. Specific objectives of the CAPP were to (1) develop children's self-esteem and self-understanding; (2) encourage children's openness to experience; (3) develop children's sense of trust and enjoyment of interpersonal communications through a variety of social interactions; (4) extend children's ability to benefit from learning experiences; and (5) promote children's physical and cognitive growth. The program's learning activities centered on both spontaneous play in a setting providing opportunities for a wide range of experiences and teacher-initiated exercises in concept development. In order to describe curriculum outcomes and to depict the basic types of interaction going on in the classroom evaluation data were gathered. This data showed that 59% of the time children were observed playing alone or with another child and 41% of the time were observed playing with the teacher. Seventy-four percent of activities were child-structured. A teacher-developed checklist with six scales as well as child studies were used in teacher-based assessment activities. Results of teacher ratings and three child studies are reported. The Skills Checklist and a description of classroom tasks used by teachers for summative assessment are appended.
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PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

The Contemporary Australian Preschool Program:
Development, Implementation & Evaluation

Jillian Belme

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Preface

The Mount Druitt Early Childhood Project was established to develop, implement and evaluate five different early childhood programs for disadvantaged children in a western suburban area of Sydney. The programs commenced with preschool-aged children and continued on through the children's first two years of formal schooling.

This document describes and evaluates the preschool curriculum components of one of the five programs. A comparison document continues the program's curricular descriptions for the subsequent two years.

The guiding principles of the Contemporary program were drawn from the tradition developed from the history of preschool education in Australia. In addition, modern ideas on similar preschool programs have influenced the development of the Contemporary program.

Jillian Belme, as a Program Assistant with the Project, had the specific responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of the program. In this endeavour she was ably assisted by Jenny Mayo, Sue Tanner and Sue Tinworth as teachers, and Liz Savage and Val Darby as teachers' aides. Both Ros Jones and Margaret Jagoe as Infants' Mistresses contributed immensely to the program's development.

The professionalism, enthusiasm and good humour of all made the program viable and rewarding for both children and teachers.

Professor Hugh Philp
Project Director
Mt Druitt Early Childhood Project

John Braithwaite
Field Director
Mt Druitt Early Childhood Project

1. *Introduction*

The Mt Druitt Early Childhood Project is a major action research project developed for disadvantaged children. Five preschool programs were developed and implemented from a range of curriculum models. A range of programs was offered from a teacher-structured model following a school-centred curriculum to an 'open' model where teachers followed the leads given by children and encouraged learning experiences based on these leads.

The Contemporary Australian Preschool Program was one of these five programs and was designated as child-centred. Within the program, the child's role was that of initiator, and the teacher's role that of responder, or facilitator (Spodek, 1970). To say that the children were the instigators of their own learning experiences is to state some at least of the program's features and characteristics. It was, for example, concerned with the personal needs and limitations of the children. It was also 'present-oriented' (Elkind, 1970). The current developmental status of the children was the defining criterion determining curriculum activities, rather than concern for later school success. Classroom activities promoting self-expression were provided in a permissive, flexible environment where few limits were imposed. The program favoured enrichment, rather than instruction, as the medium of learning (Elkind, 1973).

The Contemporary Australian Approach Program was developed from many strands of theory and practice in preschool education. The program has universal application, since it meets individual needs and develops individual programs. There were no set objectives for each child to attain, but rather a basis for future learning was laid by developing the child's positive self-image of himself as an independent learner.

2. *The Context of Program Development*

The Contemporary Program was developed at a time of challenge to the underlying assumptions and objectives of preschool programs in Australia (cf Ashby, 1975; De Lemos, 1975; Staines, 1971). Especially worrisome to these writers was evidence that the system had 'set too hard', and that old fashioned beliefs were continuing to dominate preschool practices. Moreover, theyclaimed Australian preschools had not changed their programs or goals to accord with recent research on the importance of cognitive growth in these early years.

For example, Ashby(1975) suggested that, while the development of self-concept and the provision of a warm, supportive environment are important concerns for the preschool, movement towards a more interactionist viewpoint is necessary. He further argued that the preschool should not assume that the child is a self-motivated learner. The programs should provide materials that enhance learning through manipulation, an environment where free physical movement is possible, and above all, quality interaction between adults in the preschool and each child.

Prior to the early seventies, Australian preschools presented remarkably similar programs for children in their care. All the programs were based on principles of child development and the recognition of individual differences. Special attention was given to the selection of play materials, and the importance of education through play was stressed (Pendred, 1962; Roberts, 1965).

Some other trends can be discerned in programs offered at Australian preschools. Pendred (1961) documents changes in preschool programs from a teacher-directed, small group experience to a more flexible situation geared to cater for the emotional needs of the child. The teacher's role became increasingly concerned with studying and planning to meet the all-round development of each child. This resulted in more freedom for children to select their own activities and long periods of uninterrupted play. The uninterrupted free play time provided the main section of the day's activities, and of course, reflected the confidence such preschools have in play as a method of socio-emotional and cognitive development. Traditionally, in the Australian context, play was seen as the mode by which children established their 'sense of self' (McFarland, 1960); i.e., independence from their mother, establishment of sex identity and understanding of their bodies. Such a view of play reinforced current values held about the social-emotional benefits of play and its role in sex role learning. Not surprisingly, faced with criticism even from educators maintaining an enrichment position, such a view of play in preschool education in Australia had to change. Scott (1969) for example, advocated a complete, comprehensive restatement of the issues in the general and educational development of children that are concerned with play influences.

> Preschool education is in serious danger. Therefore, in the face of questioning about the adequacy of a play approach, it uses its energies to patch up the case (Scott, 1969).

Thus Scott argued that any program set up with play as its central tool of learning should be able to document the areas of influence that play has in the development of the child. Again in Scott's (1969) article, philosophical concerns such as adult respect for the rights of children to freedom and mental health concerns, i.e., that the children have acceptable outlets for physical energy and strong emotion,were most fully enumerated. The importance of play to children's development was reinforced by such viewpoints and a number of overseas authors supported these viewpoints (cf. Smilansky, 1965).

One of the major problems in developing the Contemporary Program within an Australian tradition, is that programs in Australian preschools are based on emphases that are valued by middle-class parents. Historically, the foundation of preschool education lay with the Kindergarten Movement which was very much a middle-class philanthropic initiative and the charitable 'free' Kindergartens were staffed by middle-class teachers. Since the Second World War middle-class parents also set up preschools for their own children. It has been suggested that this inbuilt bias discriminates against working-class children and their culture (Spearitt, 1974).

Little research has been done to assess the effects of the program offered by Australian preschools on the children enrolled in them. One of the more recent Australian studies examined the effects shown by a group of middle-class children who attended a 'traditional' preschool over a three year period (Braggett, 1976). This study found that there were long-term gains in children's scores on Stanford-Binet, PPVT and Test of Operativity of the preschool group over a matched non-preschool group. At the end of first grade, these gains were especially marked in the language scores, indicating that the 'traditional' program was especially effective in developing the language of this particular set of children.

However, research in the U.S.has shown that 'traditional' programs are not as successful as other programs in producing short-term gains in psychometric or school-related achievement tests, with disadvantaged children (cf Smith, 1973. No statement of aims for preschool that recognised this position has yet been made vis-a-vis Australian preschool practices, although a belief in the universality of the model is an implicit assumption of the Australian preschool tradition. In the U.S., however, the Bank Street College of Education has developed a statement of guiding principles for teaching disadvantaged children in the preschool by 'traditional' methods (Biber, 1970). These principles call for the development of programs for disadvantaged children geared to the same developmental goals set for all children, with special emphasis on developing verbal/conceptual functioning, and autonomy as a learner in the preschool setting. Developmental theory is placed within an interaction model of learning, and methods are chosen that develop verbal/conceptual processes, but which never inhibit the personal/social goals from being realised. Suggested teaching methods are based on these general principles.

3. *The Development of the Contemporary Program*

a) The Theoretical Bases of the Contemporary Program

The Contemporary Program developed from the mainstream of Australian preschool theories, principles and practices, and the assumptions that this tradition has made about education for children of this age group. The traditional nursery school program developed in the maturationist tradition of Rousseau and Gesell with reinterpretations made in the light of pschyoanalytic theories and progressive education. Philosophically, this tradition represents a commitment to and a valuing of childhood per se, and adults involved with children are bound to see and experience the world from the child's point of view. The child above all must have freedom, freedom to act independently on innate motivations arising from basic needs.

> ... what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development; therefore the pedagogical environment should be permissive enough to allow the inner "good" (abilities and social virtues) to unfold and the inner "bad" to come under control (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

Emotional needs should be met first and the young child should learn satisfactory ways of resolving conflict.

The maturationist tradition also emphasised aspects of child development, especially those collated from the detailed observations of Arnold Gesell. This has led to the formulation of a supporting psychological model stressing 'growth' and 'nurture' through which

cognitive development unfolds through pre-patterned stages (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). Intelligence, then, grows as it is nurtured, resulting in different rates of growth applying to different individuals. They view the role of preschool teacher as providing guidance to each stage of a child's growth.

Within the concept of growth, the maturationists differentiate two distinct kinds of growth, cognitive growth and socio-emotional growth. The emotional needs of the child take clear priority over cognitive/intellectual needs at this age. Emotional development unfolds through pre-set stages, such as Freud's psycho-sexual stages, but this development can be impeded by the environment. Personality development in all the affective/social areas depends on the presence of adequate and sustaining personal relationships. Erikson has put forward the view that the basic and critical tasks in personality development in early childhood are

- a sense of trust outweighing mistrust;
- a sense of autonomy outweighing doubt;
- a sense of initiative outweighing guilt. (Erikson, 1963)

The role of the teacher is supportive, with the child's further socialisation dependent on the quality of the child/teacher relationship.

Some assumptions underlying the maturationist viewpoint need to be seriously questioned, however. First, the model of development put forward is a linear one, characterised by certain 'stages' at which certain appropriate behaviours are exhibited by the child. The acquisition of skills is progressive and the child moves up a hierarchy of skills laid out in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Recent research would indicate that this is a facile, oversimplified view of developmental concepts (Shapiro & Biber, 1972). While developmental stages are useful concepts for showing connections among diverse forms of behaviour, "the individual can never be placed at a single point in a series of developmental continua ... an individual does not operate at a fixed developmental level." (1972:66).

It is important to state assumptions such as this, for within guidelines described for implementation a range of different teacher expectations and behaviours would be generated. The teacher's view of the children would be changed if, for example, she recognised that children would not necessarily consistently show behaviour indicative of one level of development, but would on occasions lapse back into more primitive forms of behaviour from an earlier stage. Nor need this be an undesirable development, since it is more logical to view earlier developmental behaviours being integrated into later ones, rather than being eradicated by them.

The second main assumption of the maturationist tradition that is open to criticism is that different rates of individual growth are largely inborn (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). The interactionist position would assert that while there are individual differences which shape experiences, the environment contains determining factors in deciding emotional stability in the individual. The growing child has a natural urge to impose order on his environment, and the development of his ego processes will be influenced by his environment, in the variety that it has and the challenge that it provides. Significant people in the life of the child are also an important feature of his environment and the child's sense of himself as unique and independent is constructed from his experiences with objects and other people.

The Contemporary Program with its emphasis on the provision of an ordered, democratic environment and the value of all interactions within, it is committed to the interactionist position, with its more complex view of maturation processes. To this extent, the Contemporary Program could be called an interactionist program.

b) The Development of the Goals of the Contemporary Program

i) Broad goals

Since the Contemporary Program reflects the principles outlined above, broad long-term goals are more appropriate to its philosophy. It is also the case that the goals of preschool education in Australia have often been criticised as being vague, loosely expressed and unconcerned with schooling as an experience in the child's life (Ashby, 1973). Statements such as

> preschool education means concern with the fusion of living and learning for the child in his current life (Woodroffe,1973)

are frequently made, but only for those initiated to Australian preschool traditions can they have any meaning. It is difficult to translate such statements into classroom practices. Irrespective of how the aims are expressed it is evident that developments in Australian preschools depend on the teacher-in-charge's strengths and weaknesses, values and beliefs.

In the development of the Contemporary Program, an original set of goals was drawn up by teachers reflecting the main emphases of the program's theoretical orientation. For each goal a set of specific, observable behaviours was devised. Into this framework specific implementation practices were suggested to achieve program goals (See page 8). The process by which curriculum practices were decided upon was a sound, rigorous one, working from general goals with admitted underlying values, to specific goals, and finally implementation practices.

ii) Specific goals

The goals reflected the program emphases and were more concerned with the children's social-emotional development than with their cognitive development. They were based on the goals that Australian preschools have traditionally had, and have a further foundation in modern, restatements of preschool goals (Shapiro & Biber, 1972).

The specific goals were:-

a) To help develop children's self-esteem and self-understanding. By accepting children as individuals and by providing a permissive environment, children come to accept their own feelings, motives and fears. It is anticipated that children will feel able to determine their own activities and to attempt to resolve problems that choices may bring.

b) To encourage in children an openness to experience. By providing a wide range of experiences, a variety of environmental stimuli and by giving the children freedom of choice, it is envisaged that all activities, particularly creative ones, will prove enjoyable and beneficial to their development.

c) To encourage a variety of social interactions. By creating a warm, secure environment, it is hoped to develop the children's sense of trust, their enjoyment of interpersonal communication and their ability to join in collaborative projects with others.

d) To extend children's ability to benefit from learning experiences. By encouraging the children to be curious, it is hoped to develop their ability to explore the environment systematically to find answers to problems, and to enjoy increasing competence.

e) To promote physical and cognitive growth.

Through a variety of learning experiences children should increase their knowledge in social and natural sciences, develop their ability in physical co-ordination and perceptual discrimination, and develop language as a tool of communication.

While they were expressed separately, it is necessary to recognise that the above goals are seen as being essentially interrelated. Learning is best achieved in the individual who shows healthy emotional and social adjustment.

4. The Implementation of the Contemporary Program

The major implementation focus of the Contemporary Program depended on how the child's needs and abilities were viewed, and on how these were to be expressed and expanded in the preschool setting. Children were viewed as being basically curious beings, who like to make an impact on their environment through interaction with materials and people. Through identification with supportive teacher figures children gained a feeling of security which encouraged them to participate in further wide-ranging encounters with their environment. Continual success gave children confidence in their ability to learn and their enhanced self-concept layed a firm foundation for the development of independent functioning in a learning environment. Essential characteristics of the program are discussed in turn.

a) Provision of a Stimulating Learning Environment

The learning environment must be suitable for the achievement of developmentally-relevant goals for individual children. It should be ordered, open (Biber, 1970), permitting free movement and should provide materials that relate to the home environment (Ashby, 1973). Children's developing needs required that self-chosen play activities were available, and that the enthusiastic participation of adults in the learning environment was a powerful stimulus to exploratory play. Since imitation is a significant process of learning for children of this age group, adults provided good models of language for the children in their care. Children should be able to find some object, try an activity of interest, and should be encouraged to extend their range of expertise with various media in expressive/constructional activities.

b) The Role of Play

In this program spontaneous play is the main tool through which the child learns and indeed it is the form of learning most suited to the idiom of early education (Franklin & Biber, 1977). Recent theorists argue that spontaneous play is important to the child in both his cognitive development and the formation of his personality (Franklin & Biber, 1977). This viewpoint had several implications for program development.

Firstly, it meant that specific achievement objectives were out of place. Since there was no core of set experiences that all children undertook it was unrealistic to expect all children in the program to function consistently at a given developmental level.

Secondly, the aim in the classroom was to provide a wide range of situations and experiences, to have plenty of alternatives available, and to allow children plenty of time in self-initiated, exploratory play.

Thirdly, the teacher took responsibility for taking up activities initiated by the children, and from time to time provided pre-planned play experiences that helped them clarify concepts. In the Contemporary Program these pre-planned experiences also included developmentally-appropriate pre-Kindergarten concerns, e.g., learning colour names, shapes, size-relationships, and so on.

Through a widening range of free play experiences the young child can develop in the following developmental areas.

1) Sensory Areas: The program emphasised the importance of all the sense modalities, vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch in learning. While all materials and activities to a certain extent provide experiences of this kind, activities like cooking, in particular, allow for an integration of sensory skills.

2) Motor Areas: There were three types of motor development the program hoped to influence. All can take place during free play by the child playing alone or with other children. *Gross motor* development was facilitated by the provision of a wide variety of climbing equipment, jump boards, ladders, large blocks, balls. *Fine motor skills* were encouraged through the expressive activities provided, for example, painting, free drawing, cutting and pasting. *Manipulative skills* were developed through handling of relatively small pieces of equipment, such as puzzles, small blocks, peg sets, stacking toys. The manipulative toys were self-contained, had a defined end-product and consequently were self-reinforcing for children (Spodek, 1973). Manipulative activities had fairly narrowly defined purposes. Dexterity was increased with continued practice and by attempting successively more difficult tasks.

3) Cognitive Areas: During the preschool years the child develops mental skills that are related to later cognitive functioning. One of the most important of these is *reflectivity* or the ability to use previous knowledge to influence judgment. The program believed that for the four-year-old reflectivity was best facilitated through a language program which allowed ego-centred speech free reign during free activities. Opportunities were provided for

the children to recount experiences and to plan projects and predict outcomes with a teacher or other children. Materials were provided to assist the development of seriation and classification skills, e.g., stacking, sequencing toys, boxes of everyday materials for free classification. Temporal sequencing was enhanced through stories and through language activities provided in group time. The main focus though was on cognitive development through free play, utilising whatever the child was using or talking about at any given moment.

4) Symbolic Areas: The program attempted to provide many developmentally-appropriate activities to facilitate the growth of symbolic processes in the young child.

> The ability to formulate one's experience symbolically, i.e., to express, to represent and to communicate mental experience, is developed gradually from babyhood through childhood and adolescence to adulthood (Tasmanian Report, 1968, p.3.).

This section is concerned with the representation of mental/emotional experiences. Again, free play was seen as being the best medium for these abilities to develop in. Opportunities were given in free drawing, cutting and pasting, modelling and painting for children to develop their powers of representing the real world and the world of their emotions. Everyday life was represented by play in the house corner and the life of the imagination was given scope for expression in 'dressing up' activities and 'pretend' games. The importance of these experiences for emotional as well as cognitive growth cannot be overemphasised.

5. *The Learning Experiences Provided in the Contemporary Program*

The curriculum for the Contemporary Program reflected the special emphases of the program and suggested specific activities to achieve its goals. The focus was on individual children and their ways of interacting within an interesting, challenging yet informal environment. The program was 'informal' in two ways. Firstly, teachers had the freedom to capitalise on the spontaneous interests of each child and to extend any opportunities for further learning occurring during each interaction. Secondly, many activities went on simultaneously. If the child was to have freedom of choice and freedom of movement, then it was necessary to allow a variety of activities to occur.

The curriculum was arranged to cover the major developmental areas. In practice, the children learned through their specific interactions with materials and people in a relevant, engaging environment. The developmental areas, listed in order of diminishing importance in the philosophy of the Contemporary Program were

Developmental Area	General Strategy of Implementation
1. Personal) 2. Social)	Freedom of movement and self reliance in a democratic, accepting atmosphere.
3. Physical/Motor) 4. Perceptual)	Provision of specific materials to develop these skills.
5. Language) 6. Cognitive)	Interaction with adult models.

Each developmental area encompassed specific objectives which guided curriculum development. These were :-

Developmental Area	Specific Objectives
1. Personal	The development of initiative, self - reliance and self-confidence.
2. Social	The development of ease of communication with both children and adults, and the ability to work co-operatively in small and large groups.
3. Physical/Motor	The development of free, confident movement, The development of fine motor skills, e.g., stacking, cutting and pasting.
4. Perceptual	The development of ability to sort like objects; to discriminate on basis of shape, colour and other attributes.
5. Language	The development of the ability to speak clearly and confidently. The development of a wider vocabulary.
6. Cognitive	The development of an understanding of basic logical concepts of causality and time.

Teachers assessed the children's abilities in these areas through daily observations in the preschool. Since there was no 'set' curriculum it was likely that each child would develop skills in a unique way. Teachers aimed to support this development rather than impose their own processes of instruction on individual children.

a) Daily Events Within the Contemporary Program

Within the Contemporary Program the best provision that could be made to achieve these objectives was to allow plenty of time for free play by the children. It offered children a flexible timetable, allowing as much freedom of choice and movement for the children as possible. (See Table 1)

The Free Activity time represents four fifths of the total time available to the children. Some children were better able to use this time more productively than others. Teachers were tolerant of individual whims during this time, but were also watchful of individual development and growth towards self-reliance. If motivation declined and the children became less involved in activities, it indicated that the program's main objectives of independence and self-reliance were not being achieved. Timetable adjustment was one strategy that was used to rectify this situation.

Two changes were made to the timetable during the year to cater for the demonstrated needs of the group. In the afternoon session, after an adequate settling in period, the children were still reluctant to sample the activities provided indoors. Large numbers of the group played almost exclusively outdoors. Moreover parents were less inclined to stay when the children were 'running around'. Consequently, to encourage children to play with a wider range of activities and to encourage parents to stay, a brief 'indoor' period was introduced. It lasted about 20 minutes, when children spontaneously began to move outside.

TABLE 1: The Contemporary Australian Preschool Timetable

9.00 am - 11.00 am	Free Activity Time Throughout this block of time the children were free to select whatever activity they wished to do, unconstrained by time and imposed routines. Adults were available for help, to initiate activities for the dependent child, and to challenge independent learners.
11.00 am - 11.15 am	Small Group Time Teachers interacted with a small group for language/music activities.
11.15 am - 11.30 am	Large Group Time This activity involves the whole group and is used to sing songs, to learn rhymes, etc.

This was a temporary measure, running for a few weeks, but it met both of its objectives. Once children had experienced the wide range of activities available indoors and on the verandahs, they selected from both indoor and outdoor activities. Parents responded by being more willing to stay when they saw their children working with puzzles and learning manipulative skills, rather than 'just running around', although teachers had pointed out the benefits of gross motor activities and free play.

The second change was to introduce a short (15 minute) mid-session music time if children showed signs of becoming tired or aimless in the free activity period. It was held most days, but teachers had no compunction in missing it if they felt the quality of the interaction in free play was sufficiently high. They reported that the children found music group enjoyable and productive, and that they attacked tasks with renewed vigour after it.

These were the types of changes made during the year. Teachers worked hard in interacting during free-play periods and their efforts were rewarded by the growth shown in the children's range of socio-emotional, manipulative, language and cognitive skills. Spontaneous play was given pride of place within the program.

b) Programming and Planning

In a curriculum approach based on child developmental principles, the most acceptable kind of planning is based on the teachers' regular observation of children in the class. Teacher observations of child behaviour can be used in two ways. Firstly, they can contribute to a summative statement of the children's progress in various aspects of their school experience. Secondly, they can be used formatively to improve curriculum practices and to individualise activities. It is the formative use that will be discussed here.

Within the Contemporary Program teachers took responsibility for input in various areas of curriculum, e.g., social knowledge, language, cognitive areas. While this input took place formally in small groups, teachers tried to make it happen incidentally in teacher-child interaction in the free play period. Indeed, the input arranged by teachers often grew out of the expressed interests of the children, assessed informally in day-to-day events. Teachers used the written program of the preschool to record specific competencies and needs shown by children. These data provided information for the planning of children's activities. As can be seen from an excerpt from the program presented in Tables 2 and 3, a general strategy for provision of cognitive experiences for the week is shown, with comments about the competence of individuals in handling them. These comments were recorded daily.

Throughout the year individuals were assessed and after discussions, teachers planned and recorded how problems were to be handled and if parents or other professionals needed to be consulted. Some examples of this type of formative evaluation are taken from the program under the heading 'individual plans' and presented below.

"Michael, Peter, Katrina, Christine are among children who will participate in outdoor activities if invited. These children enjoy group games if these are initiated for them. Ball games will be used to involve them.

TABLE 2: Example of Program (1)

Week 11: Ending 5th August

Central Theme: Cognitive emphasis will be placed on learning through experiences, the effects of mass and weight using balance scales

Language	Music	Social Science	Cognitive	Art and Craft
No specific theme will be followed for language - however small group discuss -ions, stories, poetry, walks and incidental reinforcement of language will be part of the program	To introduce the use of percussion instruments - freely and in time to recorded music	Hospital situation set up - with stimulus of ward furniture, bandages, stethoscopes, books, pictures, etc. to stimulate specific role play	To provide experience with balance scales and a range of objects of varying mass. To provide children with correct terms i.e. heavier, lighter, greater mass, balances, the same as.	To continue to provide a range of activities - open, free collage - construction as well as particular skills activities.

TABLE 3: Example from Program, (2).

Monday

Cognitive: Balance experience available and guided.
Vocabulary: 'balance', 'heavier', 'lighter', 'same mass', etc.
'Heavier' (down) 'lighter" and 'the same' understood and used freely by Kylie, Samantha A, Shane and Melinda. Needs reinforcing. Many others also keen.

Tuesday

Cognitive: Balance equipment used throughout session.
Balancing objects: Craig and Greg. Simone, although normally very fluent, had difficulty with idea of telling a story from set of sequence pictures.
Sequence stories from Paul S. competently.

Language: Heavier than, heaviest, lighter than, lightest, level, more, less.

Wednesday

Cognitive: Activities with simple scales - obtaining a balance with variety of objects, eg., foam pieces, crayons, small blocks, plastic lids:- Gavin, Gemma, Simone.
PM session: more children listed.
Good reproduction of 3D designs.

Language: Vocabulary connected with simple scale activities.

Thursday

Cognitive: Continuation of balance experiences -
Shane revealed understanding of 'taking away' and 'adding' to create balance, but does not use language.
Making an estimation of heavier and lighter from two objects: eg., elephant and mouse, Darby and Gavin.
Sorting polystyrene pieces cut from types - Gail, Lisa.

Friday

Cognitive: Replicating 3D designs with hexagonal fitting blocks.
Alysha - easily; Kayleen S with some difficulty; Lisa J found it almost impossible.
Balance as a guided activity and for free exploration will continue to be available.

In subsequent weeks the program records any new input for the balance activities.

eg. 19th August: Balance experiences extended using a new range of objects.

and the reaction of individual children to it.

eg. 22nd August: Susan - understanding of heavier side improved. Added and subtracted to make a balance.

Paul's becoming more involved with other children in creative activities (e.g., tissue box car). This can be encouraged.

Michael and Timothy are still reluctant to join groups and may respond to individual opportunities.

Fiona, Adam and Amanda have responded to direct encouragement towards separate and creative involvement. Amanda needs firm expectations to reply verbally."

These were the procedures used for planning, diagnosis and evaluation within the program. Much was discussed that was not written down, of course, and regular discussion of children's needs was an important impetus to general curriculum planning.

c) Teaching Practices

A major implementation emphasis was given to the preparation of teachers to take part in a program which followed an unstructured curriculum with a child-centred focus. This meant that some long-practised procedures followed in a more structured school setting were to be discarded and replaced with new modes of interacting with children based on a different set of developmental and learning principles. For teachers involved in the Contemporary Program fundamental changes in attitudes were necessary, as well as the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

By far the most influential of the areas of personal development by the teachers was that of attitudes. Underlying confidence in the philosophy of the program, and a belief in its implementation practices as the best way of developing young children, gave the teachers a degree of self understanding and acceptance of their efforts. It was essential to the success of the program that teachers' attitudes and interactions conveyed recognition and acceptance of the intrinsic value of each individual child, and avoided any pre-conceived personal value-judgments relating to childhood, parents and class-based child-rearing practices.

Skills in implementation were developed from knowledge of the underpinning philosophy of the program. Initial concern was focussed on the setting up of an atmosphere that was open to, and accepting of, a range of individual differences and that recognised feelings and divergent behaviours. Teachers had to discard the set of extrinsic rewards and systems of social control usually found to ensure that limits are observed and to 'shape' appropriate behaviours. In practice, this was difficult to achieve completely, but none the less teachers learned more unobtrusive ways of promoting voluntary self-limitation within the child, such as involvement in alternative activities. Intervention was delayed as long as was possible in the general interest, and children given every opportunity to modify their behaviours themselves.

Recognition was also extended to the child as learner. Program philosophy emphasised the importance of the learner's active involvement in his environment. The teacher was responsible for forming the child's attitude to learning. A set of suitable roles that teachers could adopt to achieve program goals was drawn up.

The teacher was seen as a facilitator of learning, someone who provided conditions for socialising experiences and for cognitive development. The teacher was also viewed as a resource, a support that the children could rely on in times of emotional needs, and a guide to help them make sense of their environment and use it to their own ends. The teacher was also an interactor, whenever this role was sought or accepted by the children. In this last role, the teacher needed initiative and sensitivity, for interactions with children within the program could not be standardised. They depended rather, on the needs of the individual child in a particular circumstance.

Aides within the Contemporary Program acted as teachers within the long free play period and took responsibility for initiating and carrying through activities. Most of their learning was achieved by on-the-spot modelling of teachers in their roles than derivation from a set of guiding principles. Occasionally they acted in lieu of a teacher in planned small group or large group activity. They were not involved in the more formal activities of their own volition. However impressive work, particularly in the expressive activities, was achieved by these aides.

6. Parent Involvement in the Contemporary Program

The teachers, aides and school administrators involved with the Contemporary Program felt a greater responsibility to parents than merely to keep them informed of what was happening in the preschool and to seek their co-operation in fund-raising ventures. Not unexpectedly, parents initially showed interest in their own child's development and progress and were enthusiastic about adopting a fund-raising role. Attempts were made during 1977 to involve parents in school affairs, both informally and formally, and to provide a forum of discussion where values and practices could be challenged.

The aims the program had for parents were:-

1) To enhance and widen the skills parents have in interacting with their own and other children.

2) To inform parents of the content and values of the curriculum their children were experiencing, and the methods used to achieve curriculum objectives.

3) To provide parents with feedback concerning their child's personal, social, physical and academic abilities.

4) To allow opportunities for parents to meet together to discuss school-related and educational issues in general, and as they affect their children.

5) To use parents as a resource so that the behaviours of individual children might be better understood.

Informal involvement began first, and throughout the year parents were encouraged to stay and participate in preschool activities whenever they wished. Teachers emphasised that any time parents could spend at the preschool was valuable for all children in the program. Secondly, the presence of parents gave teachers the opportunities to discuss individual problems with parents, and to devise suitable strategies for dealing with them which could then be followed up and reinforced at home. In this way, continuity between home and school was established.

An example of extended co-operation between the home and school is related below, taken from the 1977 program :

> A program between home and preschool has been co-ordinated for S. on Mrs I's initiative. 'S' has been found to respond most quickly to deprivation as reproof for predefined, unacceptable behaviour, and a warning has been found to be sufficient thus far. However, Mrs I has requested that we keep firm restrictions on his behaviour.

In other notable cases, home support for a language development program was sought and received.

Parents responded well to informal involvement with the parents of most children enrolled giving some time to activities in the preschool. Since parents felt happy and secure about discussion in the preschool setting it was decided to extend the services the preschool offered by holding more formalised group discussion times. It was decided that it would be a useful medium to connect aspects of child development with the preschool practices and to examine their validity.

Several film days were arranged throughout the year when a relevant film was shown followed by group discussion on developmental and educational issues raised by the film. Parents were also keen to exchange anecdotes of their own and to talk about specific child-rearing practices. The Community Nurse attached to the school, who attended the film days, was able to be helpful and informative on the latter concern. Certainly, discussion of these questions lowered anxieties and allowed discussion to switch to more general issues. Attendances at these film days was very encouraging with two sessions being held, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

A toy library was set up at the beginning of the year and was used by parents continuously throughout the year. Teachers felt that parent involvement in the preschool led to interest being shown in extending activities into the home. A book lending library containing suitable books On child development, child care, was also set up. Staff at the preschool worked hard in promoting these ventures and in presenting them in an attractive and useful way. Parents were given suggestions as to possible uses to be made of toys taken home. It was also emphasised that original, creative ways of using material would arise from any particular mother/child interaction. Parents were encouraged to take these up and build on them. It was hoped that these activities would give parents confidence in their own judgement of what constituted a useful activity for their children.

Parents reported positive responses to these activities, and requests for more films came spontaneously when it was felt sufficient time had elapsed since the previous experience. Enquiries and questions were put to preschool staff at other times, enquiries which reflected both a deepening involvement in and understanding of child behaviour in preschool practices. Preschool staff responded very well to demands made by parents, and were always ready to answer questions and make a parent feel welcome. Parents at the end of the year were wondering if involvement would continue the next year in Kindergarten.

7. Evaluation of the Contemporary Program

a) Accurate summative evaluation of a program must be clearly related to the program's objectives (Zimiles, 1968). Where the objectives specify a range of achievement-oriented outcomes, a battery of achievement measures is often used. However some programs strive to influence behaviours, attitudes and skills in all three domains of the taxonomy of educational objectives, cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Different measurement techniques are appropriate for assessing behaviours in these domains. A comprehensive evaluation model will include different types of measures. Describing the relationship between these measures and how they assess program variables is a major task. How do we summatively evaluate adequately and fairly?

Child-centred programs present particular problems to the evaluator. Empirical evaluation may require a set of measurable behavioural objectives for accurate measurement. However, objectives in child-centred programs are often difficult to translate into behavioural terms (Shapiro, 1973; Zimiles, 1968). In addition, the objectives often stress long-term gains, so that the timing of the evaluation becomes an issue. Short-term summative evaluation is diametrically opposed to a program emphasing differential, individual outcomes for children affected by it (Stodolsky, 1972).

Children in programs with an informal classroom atmosphere and flexible routines are also unused to the testing situations for summative evaluation, i.e. one adult tester with one child. Their classroom privileges include freedom of choice of activity, materials and working companions. Adults adopt a facilitative rather than an interventionist instructional role, and encourage creative, divergent responses in the children. The formality of the testing situations, where certain responses are required on cue by a stranger can make such children reticent and less successful in achievement (Cazden, 1970). In fact, studies have been carried out which support this contention (Shapiro, 1973).

The most important goals of the Contemporary Program were concerned with healthy growth and development in socio-emotional skills such as self confidence and independence in learning. These abilities are difficult to measure because the psychological processes of children aged 4 and 5 years have not been sufficiently delineated for valid and reliable measures to have been developed (Shapiro, 1973; Zimiles, 1968). Consequently, the development of these skills must be looked at in the context of their developments, the classroom itself, and the interactions that happen there. If a relationship can be shown between the events of the classroom, which the program defined, and the development of socio-emotional skills in the children, a major program variable of the Contemporary Program can be described.

This evaluation section uses classroom data to attempt to describe curriculum outcomes. There are limits to the type and scope of inferences that can be drawn about program outcomes from an examination of process data (Scriven, 1965). This evaluation will use process data to describe the basic types of interaction going on in the classroom. It is not expected that individual agents responsible for certain effects will be able to be identified, but rather that an impression of classroom life will be obtained.

b) The Evaluation of the Program

The aim of the evaluation is to provide a sensitive accurate assessment of short-term curriculum effects on the children enrolled in the program. Ideally this would require extensive records of classroom life and the matching of the program's procedures to the experience and learning styles of the children (Stodolsky, 1972). No clear methodology exists for achieving this. Some early observational studies attempted it with interesting results (Bott, 1928; Van Alstyne, 1932). These data showed that children adopted individual patterns of activity given the free setting in a traditional nursery school. This type of supportive regime produced subtle differences in the learning styles of individual children.

However, limitations on the time of both teachers and program evaluator precluded the collection of comprehensive, regular reports of classroom life. Two evaluation emphases are reported in the following sections. The first concerns the process data collected by PROSE, the Project's classroom observation instrument. The second reports the interactive styles and achievements of the children recorded by summative child study statements.

i) Process data

Though PROSE was not designed specifically to monitor the Contemporary Program, it is adequate to give a synthesis of classroom life on certain gross dimensions.

The PROSE was structured to focus on interactions between children, adults and material in the preschool and could therefore indicate whether main program emphases were being implemented.

The Contemporary Program emphasises that the children should be given opportunity to explore and learn in their own individual way, with teachers often acting as facilitators in free activity time. Teachers, on occasions, however, intervene specifically for language and music activities. The program also aims to improve the children's ability to play co-operatively together and complete group projects as a major objective for social development.

The PROSE data showed that

24% of available time children were observed playing alone
35% of available time children were observed playing with another child.
41% of available time children were observed playing with the teacher.

This means that 59% of time was spent away from teacher contact. The 41% of time spent with a teacher includes the set periods of language, music and singing held daily, and incidental contacts and free play-time. These data indicated that the children were given opportunities to play independently and interact co-operatively with other children. Both of these were important program objectives for the children.

While 41% of the observations indicated that children were playing with teachers, overall PROSE data indicated that 83% of the observations were made in free time and only 14% were related to instructional activities. These data are in line with program expectations.

The PROSE also recorded whether a specific activity observed was teacher-structured or child structured. A child-structured activity was one where the choices and outcomes of the activity were specified by the child. In a teacher-structured activity the children were doing as requested by an adult. In the Contemporary Program 74% of activities were child-structured and 26% of activities were teacher-structured. In both allocations of times and selection of activities the child-centred nature of the program was reflected.

The type of activity can indicate whether program objectives are being achieved. This information is most important for programs which emphasise that the provision of a suitable climate is an important variable for promoting development. The Contemporary Program, because of its emphasis on healthy socio-emotional development should provide activities which allow the children both to explore and transcend reality. The program therefore values expressive creative activities, fantasy and dramatic play. It would be preferable, therefore, that convergent activities do not occupy more time than other activities. The PROSE data in Table 4 revealed the following breakdown for time spent on various activities in the Contemporary Program.

TABLE 4: Percentage of time spent in various activities in the Contemporary Program

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY	% OF TIME SPENT
Fantasy	Child is role playing	15
Divergent	Child is behaving divergently	20
Convergent	Child is behaving convergently	29
Social	Child is performing socially useful task	6
Kinesthetic	Child is engaged in large motor activity	12
Other	Child is doing something else	18

Only 29% of the children's time was spent performing convergent tasks. The rest of the time was spent in role play and divergent tasks, or developmentally valuable ones such as gross motor tasks. Physical development also figures among program objectives, although it is not as important as personal and social development.

ii) Group Assessment

The program's objectives were assessed internally in two ways, by a checklist and by child studies. Both of these instruments were compiled and used by the teachers in the program. There are strong arguments for using teacher-based assessment in a child-centred, developmental program. The teacher is the only person who has both thorough knowledge of planning carried out in the program and knowledge of individual children and strategies used to develop their skills, abilities and interests (Kamii, 1971). Teachers' observations and perceptions were used to evaluate classroom objectives particularly through the use of child studies, but also through the use of rating scales for socio-emotional development and informal tests for physical, perceptual, language and mathematics achievement (See Appendix B).

Evaluation was arranged for the major dimensions of program interest. These dimensions were (in decreasing order of importance)

1. Personal
2. Social
3. Physical < gross motor, fine motor
4. Perceptual
5. Language
6. Mathematics

iii) Description of the Checklist (See Appendix A)

The checklist was to consist of behaviours judged by the teachers to be indicative of desired outcomes in these dimensions. This in itself proved to be a difficult task for an individual program such as the Contemporary Program cannot be said to constitute a treatment in the usual sense of the word (Shapiro, 1973). The program does not specify a set of experiences, or skills, that every child should learn. Therefore, a set of 'base' skills that were developmentally-appropriate was drawn up. It was anticipated that most children in the program would achieve the skills outlined for the personal/social dimensions if the program was to achieve its goals. The physical dimensions (gross motor, fine motor) are more subject to individual differences. Skills tested were those that would be used in the preschool environment with materials readily found in the preschool.

The content of the perceptual and mathematics section was governed by the types of equipment available for children to play with and the content of the Kindergarten * program they would be involved with in the following year. This was not intended to teach to the Kindergarten program, or to pre-empt the experiences of the following year. It was intended to provide a base for planning Kindergarten experiences. Of course preschool teachers used materials in a more varied way than the behaviours on the checklist suggest and classification, seriation and matching activities of all kinds were part of the day-to-day program with individual children. For assessment purposes, however, only a narrow range of activities was measured; those that could be diagnostic and reveal useful information on which the Kindergarten teacher could subsequently base the program.

* Kindergarten constitutes the first year of the statutory schooling period in N.S.W. Department of Education schools.

iv) Difficulties of the Data Collection

Even though the rating instrument to be used had been jointly developed in 1976 by preschool staff and project evaluators, there were difficulties with the collection of data in 1977. Some of these were of a purely practical nature. For example, entering behaviour was not fully assessed for each child because of lack of teacher time and the pressures that the project-wide data collection was imposing on day-to-day routines in the preschool at that time. However, anecdotal records were written on each child to facilitate programming and the formulation of individual plans.

The second type of difficulty in data collection occurred with a change in staff at the preschool. The new teacher, who brought new ideas and initiatives to the program, found a scaling evaluation difficult for the personal/social behaviours she was asked to rate. These behaviours were very subjective and could not be transferred onto an arbitrary scale. Such a procedure appeared too gross. She preferred a descriptive approach and noted where individual children were either especially competent and underconfident in their socio-emotional behaviours. For the physical, perceptual, language and mathematics categories both teachers agreed on the use of rating scales.

Two factors influenced decision making in this case. The new teacher was not involved in the planning of the instrument, and accurate, honest assessment in a different style was to be preferred to arbitrary assessment of a particular type. Individual ratings on the socio-emotional behaviours are only available, therefore, on 44 out of 77 children.

v) Analysis of the Checklist

The checklist consisted of items which were scored in the form of rankings (the personal, social and physical scales) and other items which were assessed by specific tasks, and which were scored as either right or wrong (the perceptual, language and mathematics scales). The two sets of results are reported separately.

a) Children's Development of Personal, Social and Physical Skills.

Teachers rated the children on various behaviours which represented appropriate levels of achievement in personal, social and physical skills in the Contemporary Program. Their ratings were based on their observations on the children through the year.* The results are discussed in terms of each area measured.

Personal Scale

For the 17 items in the personal scale, teachers rated the children most highly on 3 behaviours 'selects activities independently' (4.500), 'comes to school willingly' (4.773) and 'is happy' (4.568). During the course of the year most of the children had settled into school, adjusted to the demands of a new environment and were able to initiate activities in an independent manner. The last variable was a major objective of the Contemporary Program.

* In the ratings 1 = not at all, never, 5 = all of the time.

The group also scored well on a cluster of behaviours related to the central concerns of the Contemporary Program. They were able to 'attend to task' (4.341) and 'complete activities'(4.295). In addition, the groups 'used a variety of classroom materials' (4.205) and 'used materials in a variety of ways' (4.045). The Contemporary Program aimed to develop task-oriented behaviours as a way of developing independent learning skills in the children, and it also attempted to develop divergent responses in the children. Other items relating to the child's emotional adjustment and attitudes revealed a high mean ranking i.e. 'responds to social reinforcement' (4.409), 'is friendly' (4.409) and 'is confident' (4.000).

The next cluster of items 'can play constructively alone', (3.977) 'ask questions' (3.659), 'participates in creative activities' (3.705) and 'participates in dramatic activities' (3.841) represented behaviours that the Contemporary Program aimed to develop in the children. The children as a group developed both a liking for and skills in these behaviours in the preschool setting. Behaviours showing poor emotional adjustment rated at the low end of the scale i.e. 'shows impatience'(1.750), 'shows fear' (1.591) and 'shows temper' (1.477).

On all positive behaviours, the children as a group scored well above the middle ranking, indicating that the group achieved the objectives laid down by the Contemporary Program for the children's personal development. In particular, the very high rating given to 'selects activities independently' represents an important achievement for the children in the program.

Social Scale

The social scale consisted of nine behaviours* chosen to give an outline of the social development of the group. The children as a group were able to 'ask adults for help when necessary' (4.523), and scored much lower on 'seeks attention' (2.114). The other behaviours on the social scale, which related to co-operation with other children and helpful behaviour in the preschool were all rated highly by teachers eg. 'works cooperatively with other children' (4.341), 'shares materials' (4.371) and 'helps other children' (4.114).

Physical Scale

Behaviours outlining the development of gross and fine motor skills constituted the physical scale.** On the gross motor scale, the best achievement by the group was shown on the items 'runs in a coordinated way' (4.523), 'hops in a coordinated way' (4.000), and climbs confidently on apparatus' (4.341). Throwing and catching skills were less well developed, and the lowest rankings were given to 'skills in a coordinated way' (3.477) 'gallops in a coordinated way' (3.341), and 'walks across balance beam' (3.864). On all of these items, although some were more developmentally difficult than others, a ranking above the mean was recorded for the group. This outcome would be expected in the Contemporary Program because of the emphasis it places on physical development.

* Ratings were 1 = not at all, never, 5 = always
** Ratings were 1 = does not attempt, 5 = completes with ease.

A similar pattern of results was found on items measuring fine motor development. The group rated very highly on 'completes jigsaws'(4.523), a skill that was related to the task completion item in the personal scale. Stacking (4.409), and folding (4.000) skills were also well developed. The remaining items on the fine physical scale clustered together and dealt with manual control of scissors (3.745), paintbrushes (3.909) and crayons (3.955). From these results it can be seen that the group's development of fine motor skills was in accordance with objectives.

Some language behaviours which could be rated on overall performance were ranked by teachers. Pictorial representation skills were well developed (4.682), and the ability to follow directions (4.568). Vocabulary development had reached a very good level (4.114) and most children were able to 'describe simple experiences and events'(4.205). The more concrete language skills, i.e. knowledge of positional/colour words are reported separately.

b) Results of Children's Performances on Specific Tasks

Some of the tasks on the checklist were tested by specific tasks done in an informal way during daily acitivities (see Appendix B). All items in the perception and mathematics scales and some items in the language scale (language concepts) were assessed in this way. Frequencies for each item were computed. The results are presented in Table 8.

1. Perceptual Scale (See Table 8)

By the end of the preschool year, virtually all children could match and sort shapes. Naming the rectangle was a more difficult task with only 39.09% of children able to achieve this consistently. The most frequent error noted by the teachers was that the rectangle was misnamed a square. As these results indicate, most of the children in the program learned to discriminate and name the basic colours.

The concept of big/little had been well learned by the children in the group. The 3D design was scored for both position and colour of the blocks. It provided an incidental colour matching task. Children sat alongside the teacher for this test so that there could not be any problems of replication from a different perspective. Children were less successful on this task, but 83% of the group still managed to perform the required task.

'First', 'last' and 'in the middle' provided difficulties. 'Last' was less well understood than 'first'. The most frequently made error reported by teachers was that children pointed to the first object when asked to point to the 'last'. This error could be due to their inability to consistently use left to right eye habits in analysing objects placed in a straight arrangement.

2. Language Scale

The children's understanding of a range of language concepts, positional words, was also assessed. These were considered developmentally-appropriate for the age group and they were likely to be encountered by all children in the group in everyday conversation (Table 9 presents these results).

TABLE 8: Results of the group on Perceptual Scale (N = 77)

BEHAVIOUR	% RIGHT	% WRONG
SHAPES		
1. Names shapes		
circle	89.6	10.4
triangle	87.0	13.0
square	78.0	22.0
rectangle	39.0	61.0
2. Matches shapes (all)	100.00	0.0
3. Sorts shapes (all)	99.0	1.0
COLOURS		
1. Names red	88.0	12.0
blue	84.0	16.0
yellow	87.0	13.0
green	83.0	17.0
2. Matches colours (all)	99.0	10.0
3. Sorts colours (all)	99.0	10.0
13 Differentiates big/little	96.0	14.0
14 Replicates 3D designs	83.0	17.0
15 Identifies first	73.0	27.0
16 Identifies last	56.0	44.0
17 Identifies middle	57.0	43.0

TABLE 9: Results of the group on the language scale (N = 77)

ITEM		FREQUENCY % Right	% Wrong
1.	On	95	5
2.	Under	92	8
3.	In	90	10
4.	Behind	85	15
5.	Between	83	17
6.	Next to	86	14
7.	Over	87	13
8.	In front of	85	15

The children's comprehension of these words was well developed, although the results indicate where extra work could be directed for the individuals needing it.

3. Mathematics Scale

The children's understanding of a selection of simple mathematical concepts was tested. The counting task however, was strictly scored. Rote counting was not considered sufficient mastery. Objects had to be counted, and a numeral attached to each object. The results in the mathematics tasks are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10: Results of the group on the mathematics scale (N = 77)

ITEM		FREQUENCY % Right	% Wrong
1.	Count to 10	66	34
2.	Knows concept big	96	4
3.	Knows concept small	96	4
4.	Knows concept short	83	17
5.	Knows concept tall	80	20
6.	Knows concept thick	62	38
7.	Knows concept thin	64	36
8.	Knows concept more	88	12
9.	Knows concept less	89	11

All pairs of attributes had been mastered by most of the group, except for 'thick/thin' which was understood by a smaller percentage of the group. On the counting task it was found that most children could count by rote to 10, but only 60% could demonstrate an understanding of one-to-one correspondence. This indicates one area which could receive special attention in the Kindergarten year.

vi) Individual Assessment

Child study, based on the observation of events taking place in the classroom is a method of evaluation more suited to the program which stresses that individual outcomes are appropriately used for each child. However, its main value is as a formative evaluation. It was decided that the child studies could be used as summative evaluation. Short descriptive reports would be adequate to highlight each individual child's abilities and style of interaction where they were not covered by the items in the checklist.

Teachers wrote comments on each child's activities and abilities within the program in the following categories:

1. child/adult interaction
2. child/child interaction
3. child/material interaction

These categories covered the gross divisions of classroom activity. The summative child study statements were written for each child in the program. The responsibility for completing these was shared by the two teachers in the program, although all four staff members discussed each child before statements were finally written. The child studies highlight individual development and allow for idiosyncratic responses to be noted. In particular, progress made by the children in the development of interaction skills can be charted.

Three child studies were selected for presentation. These represent two children whom teachers perceived to have achieved program objectives in terms of the socio-emotional development and one child who received special attention during the year.

CHILD A

Child/child Interaction:

A is a friendly, confident and popular girl. A spends quite a bit of time alone, working independently. However, she is able to enter groups and be accepted. Other children are drawn towards her.

Child/Adult Interaction:

A is attractive in both attitude and appearance. A relates confidently and warmly to adults. She is sometimes confidential and shares her sense of humour with us. A does not appear to be at all emotionally dependent on staff members.

Child/Material Interaction:

A is able to concentrate for very long periods on self-directed activities, especially craft. A's abilities are developed. Her language, perceptual and mathematical abilities are among the most developed of the children.

CHILD B

Child/Child Interaction:

B has developed pleasingly. B earlier in the year was a particular friend of M and this friendship has continued. B's role in the friendship is now far less possessive. He is happy to work alone if he is interested in a task. B is also a popular friend of a much wider circle of boys.

Child/Adult Interaction:

B is rather shy, but is thoughtful and responsive to ideas. B generally seems to be quite emotionally independent of adult attention and company.

Child/Material Interaction:

Although B has shown some interest in craft, he generally prefers to play with blocks, construction toys or out of doors, e.g. climbing, with bikes etc. B is often involved in boys' role play, i.e. fireman, police.

These two children have been able to cope with demands made by the preschool environment, given a child-centred, supportive atmosphere. Nonetheless the child studies provide a subtlety of interpretation because particular interests, skills and personal learning styles are commented upon.

One other child's study which shows individual growth in overcoming a specific difficulty is presented. The information contained in this report would not be revealed by testing the individual concerned. Certainly, it demonstrates that the observer often has to collate information from various sources and to make sensitive judgments. Only the teachers know the children well enough to make judgments of strengths, and weaknesses in socio-emotional development. Teachers are well placed to carry out this type of evaluation.

Child C

Child/Child Interaction

C is confident about approaching other children and has become steadily more accepted by other children throughout the year. C's extremely immature language may have affected her relationship with the more mature children earlier in the year. However, C communicates very effectively even with limited language and has not allowed this to handicap her socially. In recent weeks C has several times been observed in play with the most mature and popular girls. Throughout the year C's constant friend has been J and the friendship originates at home. Recently, both children have been mixing more but it seems to be J who is relying on the friendship for support.

Child/Adult Interactions:

C is popular amongst staff members. She is a friendly child who frequently smiles at adults. She approaches adults confidently and seeks attention appropriately but not frequently. Usually C approaches with a smile and a stream of barely distinguishable language. She clarifies her intentions with gesture or by leading the adult to the situation where she needs intervention. She does not seem to be particularly dependent on adults and usually goes about her activities with only brief acknowledgement of adult presence.

Child/Material Interactions:

C occupies herself busily and uses the available range of activities. Generally her use of materials is comparatively fairly immature. C tends to use independent activities (jigsaw puzzles, craft, outdoor activities) rather than those which rely on language interaction (role play etc). Although she is able to group similar shapes etc., her poor command of language does affect her understanding of tasks (labelling shape) and directions.

Conclusion

C is immature and has a poor command of language. However, in recent weeks her language has greatly improved and probably will continue to develop rapidly now. C imitates and is aware of language models and this should help her learn quickly. C is not due to start school for about five months so should have made progress by then.

C's charming friendly personality should make her a valuable social member of a class.

This report reveals that, despite difficulties, for which appropriate experiences were designed, this child has coped quite well with the preschool experience. Difficulties with language production did not prevent her from achieving well on some program objectives for socio-emotional development. Independent selection and completion of activities for example, were observed by the teachers. Certainly information such as this warns against stereotyping a child with a specific disadvantage.

8. Discussion

In this evaluation report both group and individual results are presented. Process data were used to verify that important program variables were implemented. The frequency of adult-child interaction, the ratio of teacher structured to child selected activities and the type of activity used by the children were all in accord with program objectives.

The achievements of the group and individual children were seen within this framework. Group achievements were assessed by teacher rating on a checklist comprising behaviours reflecting the main areas of learning and development for the children. Given the focus of

implementation revealed by the PROSE, the group reached satisfactory levels of achievement in their personal, social, physical, perceptive, language and mathematics experiences. The checklist also revealed specific areas of weakness for the group.

The child studies provided a deeper interpretation of the variety of ways in which the children contributed to classroom events. The PROSE classified and roughly described interactions and activity in the classroom. The child studies show how these were used by individual children given the particular implemenation of the program. Three particular cases, which represent different levels of achievement in the program were presented. Their main interest was that they revealed the different styles of the particular children in classroom situations.

It is hoped that a fairly comprehensive, but detailed picture of the program and its effects was outlined. The attempt has been made to select measures suited to a child-centred program and the main evaluators have been teachers. Perhaps reservations about evaluating the Contemporary Program in the short term at all, can be dispelled when the results of further implementation through the school grades are known.

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APPENDIX A

Contemporary Program

Skills Checklist 1977

CONTEMPORARY PROGRAM SKILLS CHECKLIST 1977

A. PERSONAL

Selects activities independently	1	2	3	4	5
Responds to social reinforcement	1	2	3	4	5
Comes to school willingly	1	2	3	4	5
Can play constructively alone	1	2	3	4	5
Attends to task	1	2	3	4	5
Completes activities	1	2	3	4	5
Uses a variety of classroom materials	1	2	3	4	5
Plays with materials in a variety of ways	1	2	3	4	5
Asks questions	1	2	3	4	5
Participates in creative activities	1	2	3	4	5
Participates in dramatic play	1	2	3	4	5
Shows temper	1	2	3	4	5
Shows impatience	1	2	3	4	5
Shows fear	1	2	3	4	5
Is happy	1	2	3	4	5
Is friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Is confident	1	2	3	4	5

B. SOCIAL

Approaches children	1	2	3	4	5
Approaches adults	1	2	3	4	5
Works co-operatively with other children	1	2	3	4	5
Asks adults for help when necessary	1	2	3	4	5
Helps other children	1	2	3	4	5
Shares materials	1	2	3	4	5
Waits turn	1	2	3	4	5
Follows routines	1	2	3	4	5
Seeks attention	1	2	3	4	5

C. PHYSICAL

a) Gross motor control

Runs in a co-ordinated way	1	2	3	4	5
Skips in a co-ordinated way	1	2	3	4	5
Hops in a co-ordinated way	1	2	3	4	5
Gallops in a co-ordinated way	1	2	3	4	5
Walks in a co-ordinated way	1	2	3	4	5
Walks across balance beam	1	2	3	4	5
Climbs confidently on apparatus	1	2	3	4	5
Throws a ball/bean bag	1	2	3	4	5
Catches a ball/bean bag	1	2	3	4	5
Moves rhythmically to music	1	2	3	4	5

b) Fine motor control

Completes jigsaws	1	2	3	4	5
Stacks objects	1	2	3	4	5
Folds paper	1	2	3	4	5
Cuts with scissors	1	2	3	4	5
Uses paintbrush easily	1	2	3	4	5
Uses crayon easily	1	2	3	4	5
Uses paintbrush with control	1	2	3	4	5
Uses crayon with control	1	2	3	4	5

PHYSICAL - B/fwd...

D. PERCEPTUAL

Names basic shapes	1	2	3	4	5
Matches basic shapes	1	2	3	4	5
Sorts basic shapes	1	2	3	4	5
Names basic colours	1	2	3	4	5
Matches basic colours	1	2	3	4	5
Sorts basic colours	1	2	3	4	5
Replicates 3D designs	1	2	3	4	5
Can differentiate big/little	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies position of object (first, last, in the middle)	1	2	3	4	5

E. LANGUAGE

Recognises simple pictures	1	2	3	4	5
Describes simple experiences and events	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies self by name	1	2	3	4	5
Uses "I" not "me"	1	2	3	4	5
Has wide vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Knows position words, eg. on, under, in, behind, between, next to, over, in front of	1	2	3	4	5
Follows directions	1	2	3	4	5

F. MATHEMATICS

Counts objects	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concepts big	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concepts small	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concepts tall	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concepts short	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concept thick	1	2	3	4	5
Knows concepts thin	1	2	3	4	5
Makes judgments about more or less	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

Description of Classroom Tasks used by

Teachers for Summative Assessment

in the Contemporary Program

November 1977

DESCRIPTION OF CLASSROOM TASKS USED
BY TEACHERS FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT
IN THE CONTEMPORARY PROGRAM
NOVEMBER, 1977

Comment on testing situations:

A. PERSONAL
(17 items) Teacher observation

B. SOCIAL
(9 items) Teacher observation

C. PHYSICAL
a) Gross motor control — Group activities and teacher observation
b) Fine motor control — Individual activities and teacher observation

D. PERCEPTUAL — Individual testing situation

Skills tested

1.	Names) Matches) Sorts)	basic shapes	circle square triangle rectangle
2.	Names) Matches) Sorts)	basic colours	red blue yellow green

TASK

Teacher uses multi-attribute blocks as basic equipment.
Child given a productive task
They were asked WHAT SHAPE IS THIS BLOCK?
WHAT COLOUR IS THIS BLOCK?
Skills were treated hierarchically, i.e. children who could not name a shape were asked to find a matching shape. Children who could match a shape were given an open-ended sorting task. Children would be asked to put all the blocks that were the same shape/colour together.

3. Replicates 3D design
A simple 3D design made from blocks
Children replicate for both position and colour of blocks.

4. Identifies position of object
Children presented with a row of 5 blocks.
Teacher asked: Touch the block that is first (last, in the middle).

E. LANGUAGE

1. Items 1 - 5 teacher observation and comment
2. Item 6 positional words (on, under, in, behind, between, next to, over, in front of)

Child given the task of placing a block (under, in, behind etc) another suitable object. A test of receptive knowledge)

3. Item 7 Follows directions : teacher rating.

F. MATHEMATICS

1. Item 1 Counts objects:

Child required to count out at least 10 objects (from a larger group of objects) from one container into another. This task was open-ended in that the children counted as far as they could, but at least to basic 10.

2. Items 2,3 Knows big/small

Child shown two objects of the same type. The only feature on which they varied was size.

Child asked SHOW ME THE BIG ...
SHOW ME THE SMALL ...

3. Items 3,4 Knows Short/Tall

Child shown a single picture of two trees.

Child asked SHOW ME THE SHORT TREE
SHOW ME THE TALL TREE

4. Items 5,6 Knows Thick/Thin

Child shown two story books

Child asked SHOW ME THE THICK BOOK
SHOW ME THE THIN BOOK

5. Item 7 Knows/makes judgment about more/less

Child shown two containers: one had 2,3 objects, one had 5-8 objects inside.

Child asked WHICH ONE HAS MORE OBJECTS?
WHICH ONE HAS LESS OBJECTS?